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ABSTRACT

The well-meaning liberal male (WMLM) is a man who talks a liberal stereotype but behaves inconsistently with his professed beliefs. Using Ajzen and Fishbein's model of behavioral prediction based on attitudinal assessment, males identified as WMLM's, sincere liberals, and traditionalists from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) were compared. Subjects were asked to pose for photographs in nontraditional sex-roles, complete questionnaires regarding their attitudes about posing, release photographs for use, and complete a measure of sex-role attitudes. Analyses of behavioral intention scores and the number of signatures on photo-release forms revealed that only WMLM's held attitudes consistent with their behaviors. Sex-role-related self-perceptions rather than perceptions of others may be better predictors of male sex-role behaviors. In a second study, males (N=36), chosen on the basis of their self-perceptions of relative masculinity and femininity as measured by the BSRI, attempted to learn nonsense syllables paired with pictures of individuals engaged in nontraditional sex role activities. Men high in femininity were less able to learn the syllables. Self-perceptions of sex-role identity seem better predictors of male sex-role behaviors. (NRB)

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Well-Meaning Liberal Male; Typical Hypocrite or Uncomfortable Alien

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Well-Meaning Liberal Male: Typical Hypocrite or Uncomfortable Alien

Despite the popular belief in the "well-meaning liberal male" (Tavris, 1972), that man who talks a current liberal stereotype but does not behave consistently with his professed beliefs, little empirical data are yet available to evaluate this concept. This paper will enumerate two research studies conducted in an ongoing program of research designed to investigate the "well-meaning liberal male (WMLM)."

Previous research by the present authors has consistently found attitude-behavioral inconsistencies among self labeled liberal males. For instance, sex role attitudes differentially predicted the rate of learning nonsense syllables which were paired with pictures of males and females engaged in sex role appropriate and inappropriate tasks. Nontraditional women learned the syllables faster than traditionalists but no significant difference was found between similarily defined male groups (Auerbach, & Gackenbach, 1974). Additionally, Gackenbach and Auerbach (1975) reported that pre-post measures of hostility, anxiety, and depression associated with a film emphasizing the restrictive nature of womens sex roles in contemporary society revealed no pre-post differences between males differing in their sex role attitudes, whereas there was a significant increase in hostility for women with nontraditional sex role attitudes with no such change among traditional females. These two studies demonstrated that while sex role attitudes were predictive of performance for females, they were unable to differentially predict performance for males. In other words, males who prefessed to support women's expanding sex roles behaved no differently than those who made no such claim.

Impressive support of the well-meaning liberal male phenomenon also comes from a recent study by these researchers. Males participated in profeminist six hour marathon groups where the Attitude Towards Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1972) was administered a few days before and immediately following participation in the groups. No change was found for subjects scores on this sex role attitude measure. However, each of the group sessions was videotaped and randomly chosen segments of

these tapes were rated by independent observers for hostility and anxiety. It was found that the male participants were judged to be significantly more hostile and anxious at the end of the marathon group than at the beginning. In other words, all male participants reported no change in sex role attitude due to exposure to the profeminist marathon group, yet behaved in an increasingly hostile and anxious manner during the group sessions (Auerbach, Kilmann, Gackenbach & Julian, 1980).

This attitude-behavioral inconsistency of the WMLM has also been demonstrated by Gackenbach (1978). In a study on male sex role attitudes she used a signal detection analysis of a perceptual defense task involving tachistoscopic recognition of photographs of men and women engaged in nontraditional sex role behavior. Gackenbach found greater perceptual defense by nontraditional males than by traditionalists. That is, males who professed liberal sex role attitudes were more threatened by viewing the sexes engaged in nontraditional activities than men who did not profess such a belief. This certainly calls into question the authenticity of the formers attitudes.

Gackenbach further classified nontraditionalists as "sincere" or "well-meaning" liberals based on Bowman and Auerbach's (1978) operational definition of the "well-meaning liberal male" as that man who reports liberal sex role attitudes but sees large differences between the typical male and the typical females masculinity and femininity traits (sex stereotypy). In terms of the perceptual defense dependent variable (e.g., as versus the response bias dependent variable) both the sincere and well-meaning liberals perceptually defended against viewing the male stimulus figure engaged in a sex role nontraditional activity, but only the well-meaning liberal perceptually defended against viewing the female stimulus figure similarly engaged.

Bowman and Auerbach (1978) also found regarding these two types of liberals, that the WMLM showed greater susceptibility to social desirability pressures and preceived themselves as more feminine than the sincere liberals. However, these

groups did not differ in response to sex role expansion propaganda nor to a bogus pipeline procedure. Relatedly, Faranda, Kaminski and Giza (1979) used a bogus pipeline procedure to assess male and female attitudes towards women. They found that use of this procedure resulted in an increased expression of traditional sex role attitudes among men but no such difference was found with women.

Study 1

This study is a further inquiry into the well-meaning-sincere liberal distinction. According to Bowman and Auerbach (1978) and Gackenbach (1978) WMLM's should evidence some attitude-behavioral inconsistency while sincere liberals attitudes should be relatively consistent with their behaviors.

Ajzen and Fishbein's (1972) model for the prediction of behaviors from attitudes was used in the present study. They consider the attitude toward the act (A_{act}), the normative belief (NB) and the motivation to comply with the normative belief (M_c) in the prediction of behavioral intentions, which are assumed to mediate overt behavior. This model was used with DeFleur and Westie's (1958) photo-release technique to determine if sincere and well-meaning liberals would exhibit attitudinally consistent or inconsistent behaviors.

Approximately 80 undergraduate males were pretested in terms of the extent to which they viewed the typical man and the typical woman as relatively masculine and feminine (sex stereotypy). This was measured with the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974), which consists of 60 positively valued personality characteristics; 20 traditionally masculine, 20 traditionally feminine, and 20 neutral. Subjects were instructed to rate the typical male and the typical female on each personality characteristic.

Forty-three males from this sample were willing to participate in the next part of the present study. They were told that the experimenters needed photographs

of men and women engaged in nontraditional sex role activities for a research project and were instructed that they would be required to pose for these photographs. No photographs would be used, the subjects were told, without signed photo-releases. Prior to posing the men were asked to indicate how they felt about releasing for publication photographs of themselves engaged in nontraditional sex role activities.

Subjects were sent into an adjoining room to fill out a questionnaire regarding their attitudes about the forthcoming task. This was developed by the present authors to test the extent to which the subjects perceived that significant others (i.e., parents, siblings, friends, and lovers) would react to the release for publication of the pictures. Specifically, it tapped the subjects attitudes about the release of the photographs for publication (A_{act}) which is postulated by Ajzen and Fishbein (1972) to be a function of the belief about the likelihood that the behavior in question (i.e., posing for photographs doing sex role nontraditional activities) will result in an outcome (i.e., negative reaction by others) (Bi) and a persons evaluation of the outcome (Ai). Bi and Ai were multiplied to determine the A_{act} value which was in turn added to the social environment influence factor ($NB(M_C)$). NB is the belief about member's of a given reference groups expectations of his behavior and M_c is the subjects motivation to comply with the reference groups expectation. Finally, the subjects were asked to differentially weight the importance of the expectations of their family and friends (W_e) and their perceptions of the outcomes for them after the pictures have been published (W_o). As per Ajzen and Fishbein for each subject a behavioral intention (BI) score was calculated:

$$BI = (A_{act})W_o + (NB\ (M_c))W_e$$

Subjects were then asked to pose for photographs in an adjoining room. Subjects were asked to pose while filing their nails (i.e., fingers fanned out in the female fashion), knitting and drying dishes (i.e., while wearing a woman's apron). After posing for the pictures each participant was asked to sign separate photo-release forms

for each type of picture (filing nails, knitting, and drying dishes) and to release the photographs for use in situations ranging from laboratory experiments where they would be seen only by professional psychologists to use in a nation wide publicity campaign advocating expanded sex roles for men and women. The number of ways which they agreed to release each photo served as the overt behavior which was to be predicted by the behavioral intention score.

The last part of their participation was filling out the Attitudes Towards the Rights and Roles of Women in Contemporary Society Scale (AWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1972). The AWS is a 55-item self-report scale designed to measure attitudes toward the rights and roles of women in contemporary society. In this study, it constituted the measure of sex role attitudes. Subjects were then debriefed.

Subjects were classified as WMLM's, sincere liberals and traditionalists based on Bowman and Auerbach's definition. In order to assure equal ends only 39 subjects were included in subsequent analyses.

Pearson product-moment correlation coeficients were calculated between behavioral intention (BI) scores and the number of signatures on the photo-release forms across all groups and within each group for each photograph seParately and for all photographs together. Across subject groups BI was significantly correlated to the average number of photo-release signatures across types of photographs ($r = .28$, $df = 38$, $p < .04$). This correlation was primarily accounted for by the nail filing photograph ($r = .22$, $df = 38$, $p < .059$). Regarding the correlations within each group between BI's and photo-release signatures, they were nonsignificant for each picture for both traditionalists and sincere liberals. Contrary to expectation only the well-meaning liberal males BI scores predicted the mean number of signatures across pictures ($r = .51$, $df = 12$, $p < .04$). When this correlation was broken down into type of picture, the knitting and drying dishes pictures approached significance ($r = .38$, $df = 12$, $p < .10$; $r = .397$, $df = 12$, $p < .089$) while the

filing nails picture reached significance ($r = .51$, $df = 12$, $p < .04$). Additional correlations between the components of BI and the behavioral criteria will also be discussed but space limitations do no allow their presentation at this time.

The major finding of this study was that contrary to expectation the WMLM was the only one whose attitudes predicted their behaviors. This provides evidence against the notion of the WMLM or at least calls into question Bowman and Auerbach's operational definition of this individual.

Study 2

Due to the results of the former study it was thought that sex role related self-perceptions rather than sex role related perceptions of others might more successfully predict male sex role behaviors. The paired-associate learning task of Auerbach and Gackenbach (1974) (i.e., learning of nonsense syllables paired with pictures of individuals engaged sex role nontraditional activities) was again used as it provided one of the clearest behavioral tasks where attitudes were inadequate in predicting male performance.

In this study males were selected for participation based on their self-perceptions of their relative masculinity and femininity. That is, several hundred male and female undergraduates were pretested with the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974). However, in this case they were asked to describe themselves.

The BSRI provides two separate scores for each respondent: a score for masculinity and a score for femininity. Those individuals whose scores are above the median for both masculinity and femininity are defined as androgynous while those whose scores fall below the median on both scales are defined as undifferentiated. Scores above the median on the masculinity scale but below the median on the femininity scale represent a masculine sex role identity while the reverse combinations define a feminine sex role identity. Nine males from each of the four sex role identity groups were contacted and agreed to participate in the present study. It was expected that those males who were high in femininity would have the least difficulty learning nonsense syllables paired with pictures of men and

women engaged in sex role nontraditional activities.

A slide projector was used to flash the stimuli, which were six photographs depicting a man and a woman engaged in sex role nontraditional activities paired with six low in meaningfulness nonsense syllables. These pictures were selected from a pool of photographs of the same man and woman engaged in sex role traditional and nontraditional activities which were standardized in previous research (Auerbach & Gackenbach, 1974). Those used were: (a) a woman bouncing a basketball in a sweat suit, (b) a woman watching baseball on TV while sipping a beer, (c) a woman on a ladder painting a wall, (d) a man knitting, (e) a man cleaning a toilet bowl, and (f) a man cooking dinner. The order of presentation was counterbalanced across lists.

Subjects completed the task as soon as they were able to remember two consecutive errorless lists in a row. The dependent variable was the number of trials to criterion averaged separately across the three female photographs and across the three male photographs.

A 2 (sex of cue) X 4 (sex role identity) analysis of variance was calculated. There was a main effect for sex of cue (F (1,32) = 21.75, $p < .01$), where the female cues were learned faster than male cues, and a sex role identity main effect (F (2,32) = 3.44, $p < .05$). A Newman-Keuls post-hoc test was performed for the four levels of sex role identity. Feminine males were slower to learn the nonsense syllables than undifferentiated males (q = 4.64, $p < .01$) and masculine males (q = 5.48, $p < .01$). It should be noted that the androgynous male-masculine male difference approached significance (q = 3.20, $p < .06$) with androgynous men learning the nonsense syllables slower than the masculine men.

Contrary to expectation those males who were high in femininity (feminine and androgynous) had the most difficulty learning nonsense syllables paired with pictures of men and women engaged in sex role nontraditional activities. Perhaps because of their own femininity they are more sensitive to societal taboos against cross-sexed behaviors in men (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble, & Zellman,

1978) and viewing such behaviors increases the salience of this antisocial aspect of themselves thereby creating anxiety sufficient enough to interfer with learning. In sum, the first study did not support the notion of the well-meaning liberal male as being the only male who exhibits attitude-behavioral inconsistency. Quite the contrary he was the only one who was consistent. None-the-less sex role attitude measures, as much as they represent female expanding roles, may be inadequate in differentially accounting for male sex role behaviors. As Lenney (1979) has recently pointed out only when multiple sex role related trait measures are used will we be able to adequately predict sex role related behaviors. Sex role identity, as used in the second study, seems to show more promise in predicting male sex role behaviors. Therefore, future research might more profitably use both measures.

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